



Salt Marsh Observations Worksheet (teacher guide)

A. Ecology of the Coastal Wetlands

What makes salt marshes different from other types of wetlands?

Salt marsh plants are **specialy adapted** to live in areas that are periodically covered by tidewater which may contain salt. The salt would kill most plants but because the plants of the salt marsh have special adaptations like salt glands or special cells to hold the saltwater. In this way, **they can out-compete** other types of plants. They can also survive in conditions where much of the sunlight is blocked out by muddy estuary waters.

Identify four kinds of salt marsh plants by name and key characteristic.

Marsh Plant Name	Key Characteristic
<i>Pickleweed</i>	<i>Cylindrical, segmented leaves</i>
<i>Saltgrass</i>	<i>Leaves form v shape in one flat plane and sometimes have crystals of dried salt visible</i>
<i>Lyngby's Sedge</i>	<i>Long, narrow leaves with v shape groove down the center of the leaf</i>
<i>Seaside Arrowgrass</i>	<i>Long, fleshy ,narrow leaves and many flowers on stalk almost as long as leaves</i>

What benefits to healthy salt marshes provide to animals and plants of the estuary?

- *Clear water*
- *Food in the form of detritus(decaying plants and animals provide nutrients and food)*
- *Buffer wave energy providing quiet, calm waters for rearing young fish, crabs, and other estuary life*
- *Cover for migratory and resident birds*
- *Absorb flood waters*



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